

PARTIAL TRANSCRIPTION - ORIGINAL FOLLOWS

1. Three weeks ago this weekend there took place at Camp David [word excised] Exercise" more or less under the control of some people from RAND and with participation by representatives of State, Defense, JCS and elsewhere. Mr. Thomas C. Schelling was the head controller; he is a Harvard and RAND colleague of Carl Kayesen's as well as the author of the intellectually formidable book called The Strategy of Conflict.

2. There is a formal report on the Exercise but it stands about 3-inches thick and is thus so loaded with detail as to challenge appropriate summarization by anyone who not participate in the Exercise. More valuable are Mr. Schelling's analytical observation which he completed a few days after the Exercise ended. Some of these observations are highly challenging and almost all very interesting. There follows a summary of a few of the most important.

a. Conveying intent by action is extraordinary difficult. There is an unmistakable tendency to exaggerate the success of communication, the accuracy with which your intent is conveyed to the enemy. This partly because the message has to penetrate a lot of "noise" a lot of activity that may drown or distort the message. One cannot hear the arguments by which an action is selected, join the discussion, participate in reaching a consensus, and then step aside and judge how it looks to the enemy. Allied to this point is the tendency to overestimate how firm, bold, and decisive one's actions appear to the enemy if one has planned them that way; the tendency is to judge oneself by plans rather than actions, but the enemy sees the actions, not the plans.

b. [line excised] The West must strive for physical control over something that matters to the enemy, because if the West can grab something and hold it, and if the enemy can't take it away without raising the level of violence, then the West has the means of putting pressure on the enemy.

c. Nevertheless it is often true that a given weak and risky position for the West is not necessarily all bad; many positions that are risky and uncomfortable to us cause risk and discomfort to the other side, and can be treated as an asset rather than as a liability.

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MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL TAYLOR
SUBJECT: [] Exercise at Camp David, 8-11 September 1961

1. Three weeks ago this weekend there took place at Camp David a "Exercise" more or less under the control of some people from RAND and with participation by representatives of State, Defense, JCS, and elsewhere. Mr. Thomas C. Schelling was the head controller; he is a Harvard and RAND colleague of Carl Kaysen's as well as the author of the intellectually formidable book called The Strategy of Conflict. There is a formal report on the Exercise but it stands about 3-inches thick and is thus so loaded with detail as to challenge appropriate summarization by anyone who did not participate in the Exercise. More valuable are Mr. Schelling's analytical observations which he completed a few days after the Exercise ended. Some of these observations are highly challenging and almost all very interesting. There follows a summary of a few of the most important.

a. Conveying intent by actions is extraordinarily difficult. There is an unmistakable tendency to exaggerate the accuracy of communication, the accuracy with which your intent is conveyed to the enemy. This is partly because the message has to penetrate a lot of "noise", a lot of activity that may drown or distort the message. One cannot hear the arguments by which an action is selected, join the discussion, participate in reaching a consensus, and then stop and judge how it looks to the enemy. Allied to this point is the tendency to over-estimate how firm, bold, and decisive one's actions appear to the enemy if one has planned them that way; the tendency is to judge oneself by plans rather than actions, but the enemy sees the actions, not the plans.

b. The West must strive for physical control over something that matters to the enemy, because if the West can grab something and hold it, and if the enemy can't take it away without raising the level of violence, then the West has the means of putting pressure on the enemy.

c. Nevertheless it is often true that a given weak and risky position for the West is not necessarily all bad; many positions that are risky and uncomfortable to us cause risk and discomfort to the other side, and can be treated as an asset rather than as a liability.

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d. Whoever it is who has to initiate the action that neither side wants is the side that is deterred. In a fragile situation, good strategy involves leaving the overt act up to the other side. If the overt act is disproportionate in its likely consequences, compared with the situation it seeks to remedy, it is deterred.

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e. The main instrument available to the West is the ability to manipulate the risks of undesirable consequences to both sides. The whole strategy of the West appears to depend on the enemy's fear of a consequence that the West joins in fearing, and on using that fear skilfully to deter and intimidate. The West should carefully act in such a way as to reduce the enemy's confidence that the thermostat is in his hands at all times.

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f. A small sign of boldness is a sign of weakness; It may be better to do nothing and be thought cautious than to act with excessive caution and remove all doubt.

g. Actions off the central stage may appear evasive. Diver-sionary actions at sea or in other theaters are in danger of being interpreted as evasive. As supplements to an adequate response on the central stage they may be potent, but in general measures that seem to shift action to another stage, tend to be interpreted as efforts to move to where things are safer.

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Copy to:
Col. Dwell